



GAME PLAN
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NEEDS / GAP ASSESSMENT TOOL

A guide to assist coaches in assessing needs and gaps in
the area of personal and team mental health

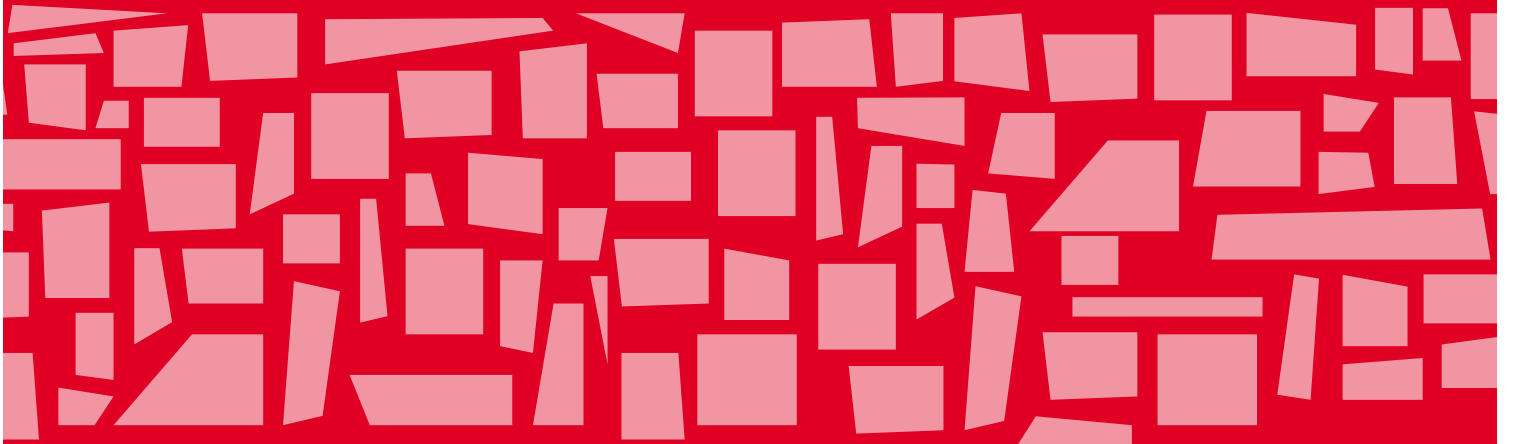


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PURPOSE

The purpose of the Needs / Gap Assessment tool is to guide coaches in identifying and addressing personal and team needs and gaps in the area of mental health.

The tool was developed by Game Plan and is aligned with the priorities enumerated within the Mental Health Strategy for High Performance Sport in Canada. Any coaches who have questions or need support in applying the tool may contact Game Plan's

Mental Health Manager, Krista Van Slingerland

DEFINITIONS

Mental Performance

The capability with which individuals use cognitive processes (i.e., attention, decision-making, perception, memory, reasoning, coordination) and mental/self-regulation competencies (i.e., knowledge and skills) to perform in their changing environment. Examples of competencies include goal-setting, planning, motivation, self-confidence, arousal/emotional/attentional control, imagery, resilience, self-talk, stress management, communication, leadership, and evaluation.

Mental Health

A state of psychological, emotional, and social well-being in which individuals are capable to feel, think, and act in ways that allow them to enjoy life, realize their potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community.

Mental Health Challenges

Symptoms of mental illness that fall below clinical levels. These symptoms are troublesome to the individual, however, they manage them and do not experience distress or impaired functioning in their personal and professional activities for an extended period of time.

Mental Illness

A health condition characterized by alterations in an individual's feeling, thinking, and behaving, leading to significant distress and impaired functioning in their personal and professional activities. It pertains to all diagnosable mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders, and substance use disorders.



REFLECTION

1. How might supporting athletes and colleagues to thrive (i.e., achieve and maintain optimal emotional, social, and psychological well-being) align with the mission, vision, and values that guide your team / club? Write your team / club's mission, vision, and values below and consider how efforts to support thriving athletes and colleagues may contribute to their fulfillment.

Strategic Component	How to support thriving and help meet mission, vision and values
TEAM / CLUB MISSION	
TEAM / CLUB VISION	
TEAM / CLUB VALUES	

2. What are your team / club's goals for this season? How might a focus on mental health in your team / club's yearly training plan (YTP) help meet these goals? Use the table below to organize your thoughts.

Goal / Objective	How integrating mental health into the team's YTP can contribute to meeting this goal



HINT: ARE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING A PRIORITY?

Consider integrating these areas into your answers to question 2.

PERFORMANCE

Mental health is a key input of both mental and physical performance. Mentally healthy athletes, coaches, and support staff are more likely to achieve sustained optimal performance in the workplace, DTE, and competition. Likewise, symptoms of mental illness can impair cognitive and physical performance when individuals are not adequately supported.

Learn more.

SAFE SPORT

Athletes, coaches, and support staff who are involved in, or alleged to be involved in a Safe Sport incident are likely to experience mental health challenges as a result. Knowing what resources are available to support your athletes and colleagues is an essential part of your duty of care.

Learn more.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Proactively addressing mental health, preventing distress, and planning for emergencies are strategies to mitigate team risk, and promote engagement, performance, and sustainability.

Learn more.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

Promoting the inclusion and support of athletes, coaches, and support staff who may be struggling, and preventing bullying, harassment and discrimination are important steps towards meeting your commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Learn more.



CURRENT STATE ASSESSMENT

3. Where is your team / club at with respect to mental health right now? What are some key indicators that let you know where you stand? Use the check list below to get started.

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	Assessment, Diagnosis, Treatment, and Recovery
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do athletes know what mental health supports are available to them and how to access these resources?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are the pathways to support consistently and effectively communicated to athletes?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are coaches aware of what mental health supports are available to them and do they know how to access these resources?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do both athletes and coaches know if / how their sport organization will support them financially if they choose to access these resources?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the team have any athlete-screening protocols in place for early detection of signs and symptoms of mental health challenges / illnesses?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the team have clear protocols to support athletes experiencing mental health challenges / illnesses to stay-in-sport when it is safe for them to do so?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the team have clear return-to-sport protocols (e.g., which professional(s) clear athletes to resume activity) to safely re-integrate athletes who have ceased sport due to mental health challenges / illnesses?

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	Prevention of Mental Health Challenges and Mental illness
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are coaches and support staff aware of the risk factors specific to their sport / discipline that can compromise mental health, and exacerbate or trigger mental illness?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have all coaches completed Safe Sport Training via the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC)?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are athletes, coaches, and support staff aware of the Canadian Sport Helpline, its purpose and how to access it?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does your NSO have a designated Safe Sport officer? Is it clear how to contact this person?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have any coaches received training (e.g., Mental Health First Aid, Suicide First Aid) to recognize and intervene in mental health crisis situations?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are athletes, coaches, and support staff aware of available crisis resources (e.g., Canada-wide 24-hour Helpline: 1-833-456-4566)?







YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	Promotion of Mental Health
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have athletes, coaches, and support staff been offered mental health literacy training (e.g., CAC Mental Health in Sport module)?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does your team/club have access to Mental Performance Consultants ¹ and a plan to implement mental skills training within YTPs?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are policies / procedures inclusive? Might they inadvertently contribute to stigma, bullying, or harassment, or discourage help-seeking?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does your team/club support initiatives within the sport system that contribute to stigma reduction, mental health promotion, or prevention of mental health challenges / illness (e.g., CAC Responsible Coaching Movement, LGBTQ2S+ inclusion training)?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	TOTALS







4. Are there any other ways that your team / club addresses mental health (e.g., working with an MPC*, "checking in" with athletes on a regular basis, promoting self-care)? If so, list them below.

* Mental Performance Consultants (MPCs) hold a masters and/or doctoral degree in sport psychology or a related field. With foundational knowledge and skills in sport sciences, psychology, and counselling, MPCs provide individual or group consultations geared toward improving sport performance, team processes, and overall functioning and well-being. MPCs working within the sport system should be professional members of the Canadian Sport Psychology Association.

DESIRED FUTURE STATE DEVELOPMENT

5. Ideally, where would you like your team / club to be in its address of mental health? The chart below suggests varying future targets your team / club might strive to meet, and the likely level of resource input required to achieve them. Make additions so that the targets are specific to your team / club and measurable (e.g., add numeric / percentile targets).

PRIORITY AREA	TARGET	RESOURCE INPUT NEEDED
<p>ASSESSMENT, DIAGNOSIS, TREATMENT & RECOVERY</p>	<p>Athletes, coaches, and support staff are aware of the mental health supports available to them</p>	<p>low</p> 
	<p>Stay-in-play protocols are developed and / or implemented for athletes experiencing mental health challenges or mental illness</p>	<p>low-moderate</p> 
	<p>Return-to-play protocols for athletes experiencing mental health challenges or mental illness are developed and / or implemented</p>	<p>low-moderate</p> 
	<p>Screening protocols to detect signs and symptoms of mental health challenges / illnesses are developed and / or implemented</p>	<p>moderate</p> 

PRIORITY AREA	TARGET	RESOURCE INPUT NEEDED
<p>PREVENTION OF MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AND MENTAL ILLNESS</p>	<p>Athletes, coaches, and support staff are aware of available Game Plan resources</p>	<p>low</p> 
	<p>Sport-specific factors that can compromise mental health, and exacerbate or trigger mental illness are identified</p>	<p>low</p> 
	<p>Known periods of vulnerability are identified in YTPs</p>	<p>low</p> 
	<p>Athletes, coaches, and support staff are aware of the Canadian Sport Helpline, its purpose and how to access it</p>	<p>low</p> 
	<p>Athletes, coaches, and support staff are aware of available crisis resources</p>	<p>low</p> 
	<p>A plan / resources / supports are implemented to address known periods of vulnerability</p>	<p>low-moderate</p> 

PRIORITY AREA	TARGET	RESOURCE INPUT NEEDED
<p>PREVENTION OF MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AND MENTAL ILLNESS</p>	<p>Athletes, coaches and support staff receive crisis intervention training (e.g., Mental Health First Aid, Mental Health 101)</p> <p>A plan / resources / supports are implemented to address sport-specific factors that can compromise mental health, and exacerbate or trigger mental illness</p> <p>A protocol to support athletes, coaches and support staff involved in instances of / alleged instances of maltreatment are developed / communicated</p> <p>Your NSO's Safe Sport Officer is identified, and contact information is distributed</p>	<p>low-moderate</p>  <p>moderate</p>  <p>moderate</p>  <p>moderate-high</p> 

PRIORITY AREA	TARGET	RESOURCE INPUT NEEDED
<p>PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH</p>	<p>Athletes, coaches, and support staff receive mental health literacy training</p> <p>Coaches reflect on their coaching practice to ensure their approach doesn't inadvertently harm athletes</p> <p>An MPC is hired / contracted to implement mental skills training with athletes, coaches, and support staff</p>	<p>low</p>  <p>low</p>  <p>moderate-high</p> 

6. Are there any other mental health targets you'd like to hit (e.g., develop a mental health strategy specific to your sport)? Write them below:



BARRIERS TO DESIRED FUTURE STATE

7. Are there any barriers preventing your team / club from reaching its desired future state when it comes to mental health?

MICROSYSTEMIC FACTORS

Barriers at the individual level (e.g., the attitudes/beliefs of athletes, coaches, or support staff)

EXOSYSTEMIC FACTORS

Barriers at the organizational level (e.g., human resource capacity, sport rules)

MACROSYSTEMIC FACTORS

Barriers at the sport system level (e.g., funding priorities, system organization)



PLAN OF ACTION

8. How will you close the gaps between your team / club's current and desired future state, and meet the targets related to mental health that you've identified?

When do you want to meet your targets? What resources are required? Who can help?

TARGET	YEAR	ACTIONS / RESOURCES NEEDED

Do you need support using this tool or implementing your plan? Contact Game Plan's **Mental Health Manager, Krista Van Slingerland**

FACT SHEET: MENTAL HEALTH AND SPORT PERFORMANCE

Mental health is a key input of both mental and physical performance. Mentally healthy athletes, coaches, and support staff are more likely to achieve sustained optimal performance in the workplace, DTE, and competition.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health can be understood as the sum of an individual's emotional, social, and psychological well-being.¹ More specifically, mental health is characterized by a state of well-being in which individuals are capable to think, feel, and behave in ways that allow them to enjoy life, realize their potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community.²

- Research shows that athletes with greater levels of well-being are more likely to thrive in their competitive environment³
- Flourishing mental health is foundational to positive mental performance.⁴ High levels of mental health has been noted by Mental Performance Consultants (MPCs) as necessary for the uptake, retention, and application of mental skills training
- Levels of health (positive physical, mental, and social well-being) impact individuals' ability to adapt and respond to challenges and stressors within and outside of sports
- Within training and competition, performance outcomes are determined by a number of cognitive, affective, physiological and behavioural processes that are impacted by both internal factors (e.g., level of mental health, mental skills) and external factors (e.g., competition environment, weather)⁶
- Physical and psychological stress impact athletic performance and can hinder training, transitions, team functioning, and rehabilitation following injury if not adequately managed⁶
- Physical and mental health are inextricably linked. Physical challenges (e.g., sport injury, intense training loads) impact athlete's mental health, and conversely challenges to athletes' emotional, social, and psychological well-being have repercussions in the physical domain
- Sport psychology interventions (e.g., mindfulness-based, resilience-focused) facilitated by an MPC can contribute to or maintain athletes' mental health and act as a buffer against distress⁵

Find out what mental health resources are available to high-performance athletes, coaches, and support staff through Game Plan, [here](#).



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FACT SHEET: MENTAL ILLNESS AND SPORT PERFORMANCE

Symptoms of mental illness can have a detrimental impact on cognitive and physical performance when individuals are not adequately supported.

MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Symptoms of mental illness that fall below clinical levels. These symptoms are troublesome to the individual; however, they manage them and do not experience distress or impaired functioning in their personal and professional activities for an extended period of time.

MENTAL ILLNESS

A health condition characterized by alterations in an individual's feeling, thinking, and behaving, leading to significant distress and impaired functioning in their personal and professional activities. It pertains to all diagnosable mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders, and substance use disorders.^{7,8}

- High performance (HP) athletes experience mental illness at a similar rate to the general population (20% of Canadians annually)^{9,10}
- HP athletes are particularly susceptible to certain mental illnesses (e.g., eating disorders) due to their sport participation^{9,11}
- Symptoms of mental illness (e.g., depression, anxiety, ADHD) can impair the cognitive and physiological processes that contribute to athletes' performance, increase the risk of injury (including concussions), and slow the process of recovery^{2,13,14,15}
- Factors specific to HP sport environments (e.g., body composition norms, maltreatment, injury, public notoriety, pressure to perform, lack of financial support, travel schedules that impair optimal sleep, transitions) can increase athletes' risk of experiencing mental health challenges and mental illness^{16,17}
- With adequate support, many athletes can safely remain in sport and thrive in training and competition while managing mental illness.
- In some cases the safest course of action may be to temporarily cease training and competition until the athlete has adequately recovered – a decision that should be made by the athlete in concert with a qualified health professional.

Find out what mental health resources are available to high-performance athletes, coaches, and support staff through Game Plan, [here](#).



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FACT SHEET: MENTAL HEALTH AND MALTREATMENT IN SPORT

Athletes, coaches, and support staff who are involved in a Safe Sport issue are likely to experience mental health challenges as a result.

MALTREATMENT

Maltreatment is an umbrella term that refers to: all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power¹⁸

- A significant proportion of current (67%) and former (76%) National Team athletes reported experiencing maltreatment in sport in a recent study, most prevalently psychological harm and neglect.¹⁸
- Coaches, peers, HPDs and sport administrators were the most often cited source of maltreatment¹⁸
- The experience of maltreatment is associated with lasting negative mental health outcomes such as self harm, disordered eating, eating disorders, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and suicidal ideation^{18, 19}
- The mental health impacts of maltreatment can last long beyond the experience itself, affecting quality of life and well-being for years following the incident(s)^{18, 20}
- Only 19% of current Canadian National Team athletes and 9% of retired athletes felt supported by their sport organization while receiving help for a mental health concern related to¹⁸ maltreatment
- The fear of being accused of maltreatment is a stressor reported by coaches, adding to the myriad of other sources of stress (e.g., overwhelming coaching workload, tenuous job security, management of the Olympic / Paralympic cycle) identified by high-performance coaches²¹⁻²⁵
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are mental health implications for those who are, alleged or actual, perpetrators of maltreatment. These individuals may also require mental health support

The Canadian Sport Helpline is available to victims and witnesses of harassment, abuse or discrimination in a sport setting.

Phone or text message: 1 888 83SPORT / 1 888 837-7678

Find out what mental health resources are available to high-performance athletes, coaches, and support staff through Game Plan, [here](#).



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FACT SHEET: MENTAL HEALTH AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Proactively addressing mental health, preventing distress, and planning for emergencies are strategies to mitigate organizational risk and promote engagement, performance, and sustainability.

MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

An effective positive approach involving policies and practices that enhance the capacity of individuals and systems to develop and sustain positive mental health.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

The extent to which members of a team believe that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking (e.g., asking for help, admitting one's errors, seeking feedback).³¹

- Sport organizations have a duty of care to their athletes, coaches and support staff to protect their mental health and psychological safety in the workplace (e.g., office, DTE, competition environment)³²
- This organizational duty of care can be met through mental health promotion, distress prevention, and emergency planning
- Improving and protecting psychological well-being and safety in the sport workplace contributes to (a) risk mitigation, (b) cost effectiveness, (c) recruitment and retention of athletes, coaches, and staff, and (d) performance and sustainability³³
- Psychological safety is associated with team resilience, athlete satisfaction, and team performance, and protects against burnout³⁴
- Promote mental health: Take steps to enhance the capacity of athletes, coaches, and support staff to effectively develop and maintain positive mental health (e.g., offer mental health literacy training, institute policies that promote work-life balance, support athletes' holistic development)
- Prevent distress: Minimize general (e.g., management practices characterized by a lack of transparency, unsupportive organizational culture) and sport-specific (e.g., potentially harmful body norms and ideals, harmful / maladaptive coaching practices, unsupportive team culture) factors known to contribute to compromised mental health
- Emergency planning: Developing a plan in case of a mental health emergency (e.g., suicidal ideation, mania) will allow you to effectively and compassionately react in the moment to keep your athlete, coach, or staff member safe

Find out what mental health resources are available to high-performance athletes, coaches, and support staff through Game Plan, [here](#).



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FACT SHEET: MENTAL HEALTH, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Recognizing the social determinants of health that may contribute to compromised well-being, promoting the inclusion and support of athletes, coaches, and support staff who may be struggling, and preventing bullying, harassment and discrimination are important steps towards meeting your team / club's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health can be understood as the sum of an individual's emotional, social, and psychological well-being.¹ More specifically, mental health is characterized by a state of well-being in which individuals are capable to think, feel, and behave in ways that allow them to enjoy life, realize their potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community.²

- Marginalized communities experience greater mental health challenges compared to non-marginalized communities due to the unique stressors and challenges they face²⁶
For example:
- In addition to sport-specific stressors that have the potential to compromise their well-being, Paralympic athletes can experience a range of disability-specific stressors as well²⁷⁻²⁸
- Racialized athletes face a host of unique stressors and challenges (e.g., systemic racism, micro-aggressions) not experienced by their White peers that contribute to an increased risk of depression and suicidal ideation²⁹
- Sport environments / cultures can be uniquely challenging to the mental health of LGBTQ2S+ and non-binary athletes and coaches, given that research shows they may disproportionately face rejection by peers, harassment, pressure to drop out of sport, and underperformance compared to heterosexual and cisgender sport participants³⁰
- Female athletes may face barriers not experienced by their male peers (e.g., pay inequity, sexualization, returning to sport following pregnancy) that can compromise their well-being
- Recognizing and addressing the barriers and challenges faced by marginalized athletes, coaches, and support staff will contribute to improved mental health outcomes for these groups
- Mental illness is a recognized disability under provincial Human Rights legislation; athletes coaches and support staff experiencing mental illness have the right to be free from abuse, harassment, and discrimination

Find out what mental health resources are available to high-performance athletes, coaches, and support staff through Game Plan, [here](#).



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Find out what mental health resources are available to high-performance athletes, coaches, and support staff through Game Plan, [here](#).



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Game Plan, which is proudly powered by Deloitte, was developed in collaboration with Sport Partners at the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Canadian Paralympic Committee, Sport Canada and Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network (COPSIN). Game Plan's stakeholders work together to provide athletes with the support and resources they need to thrive on and off the field of play.

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